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SENATE RESOLUTION 46
By Dixon

A RESOLUTION to congratulate the members and pastor of
Monumental Baptist Church of Memphis on the
occasion of the church's 40th anniversary.

WHEREAS, local churches and their congregations are among those institutions within our state and nation upon which a just and orderly society is based. Churches are focal points in which Tennesseans come to worship their Creator as a community of faith and from which the members can launch outreach efforts to improve the life of their communities and manifest a response to God's saving grace; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, the members and pastor of Monumental Baptist Church at 704 South Parkway East in Memphis celebrated forty years of service to God and their fellow human beings; and

WHEREAS, in March of 1959, thirty-four members of the Greater White Stone Missionary Baptist Church left to organize a new congregation. Lacking both a facility to house their worship and a pastor, they nevertheless chose the name "Monumental" to symbolize the anticipated great events to come in their life together; and

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WHEREAS, initial worship services were held in members' homes until May of 1959 when the congregation was able to rent the Foote Homes Auditorium at 578 Mississippi Boulevard. Mr. Ira Badger paid the first month's rent of \$15.00 and other members raised money to pay additional rent; and

WHEREAS, local ministers such as the Reverend Rogers and the Reverend Warren Moon conducted services for the new congregation. The church soon contacted a past pastor of the Greater White Stone Church, the Reverend H. R. Jelks, then in Chicago. Rev. Jelks recommended a young pastor, the Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles, who had been an assistant to Dr. Louis Rawls of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in July 1959, the 24-year-old Rev. Kyles preached his first sermon at Monumental, entitled "Things Happen after Prayer." His continuing theme throughout his ministry, that "nothing is impossible, because God has the last word," inspired the church membership in their upward path; and

WHEREAS, in August 1959, Monumental acquired its first permanent home in the Woolfe and Woolfe Funeral home building at 50 South Parkway West. Membership began to increase steadily and the first baptisms were held at Barbee's Lake; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Kyles was stricken ill and was hospitalized from August 1963 to August 1964; he continued his ministry, securing the services of one of his "sons" in the ministry, the Reverend Melvin Smith, to fill in during his absence; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to the active ministry, Rev. Kyles immediately launched a plan to acquire an existing church building at 704 South Parkway East. Rev. Kyles' exhortation, "don't you ever give up," strengthened the membership as they contemplated this daunting new goal. The church made its first payment on June 7, 1965 and paid off the balance on May 21, 1975; and

WHEREAS, secure in their new location the members of Monumental turned out to the community, purchasing several substandard houses directly behind the church and razing them

to build "Monumental Pride Homes," an apartment dwelling for the elderly. Several homes across from the church were purchased and converted into church parking and a day care center was established and operated in the lower level of the church for ten years; and

WHEREAS, the members of Monumental Church recognized early the need to prepare youth for leadership roles. Their growing Youth and Young Adult Department includes two choirs, an usher board and a Junior Deacon Board, all designed to support youth and draw them into active church roles. In further pursuit of its interest in youth, the church "adopted" Orleans Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, Monumental Baptist Church fully embraces all new members, who receive a detailed orientation to the church and instantly have all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of any other member. New members attend a New Members' Sunday School Class and become a part of the "Calendar Club" for the month of their birth; and

WHEREAS, Monumental has continued its growth, causing Rev. Kyles to offer plans for building a new sanctuary and fellowship hall in January of 1995. In February the first Barbara Motley-chaired Building Fund Committee meeting, with the theme of "Taking A Leap of Faith Through Pledges and Tithing," was held. On May 28, 1995, ground-breaking ceremonies for the new edifice were celebrated; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 1998 at 10:45 a.m., Rev. Kyles cut the ribbon for entrance into the new building, and headed a procession of associate ministers, deacons, trustees, deaconess board members, ushers, greeters in their new gold blazers, members and visitors and the Chancel and "2001" choirs in their new choir robes; and

WHEREAS, the sanctuary was filled to capacity for the inaugural worship service; following the regular order of service there was a "Passing of the Keys" ceremony; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Melvin C. Smith and the Mt. Moriah - East Baptist Church participated in the 3:30 p.m. services of the "Grand Opening Celebration" which included three nightly services at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 2, through Wednesday, March 4, 1998; and

WHEREAS, Monumental Baptist Church, its dynamic pastor and its faithful congregation now continue their path of joyous and faithful service to God and their community, building on the record of the past forty years and looking to the future with hope and confidence, always growing in spirit, stewardship, ministry and community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we congratulate the congregation and pastor of the Monumental Baptist Church on the occasion of their fortieth anniversary of life together as a community of faith and wish them all the best in the years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.